

Explosive New Law Sparks Global Concern Over Criminalized Prayer

A controversial new law in Australia's New South Wales has ignited global backlash after making certain types of prayer potentially illegal—even when requested.

The Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024 permits religious expression and prayer, but only if it is not “directed to changing or suppressing an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity.”

During a recent CBN News segment, reporter Billy Hallowell explained the confusion and concern surrounding the law’s language. “My initial thoughts were what in the world is going on—but I think we know what in the world is going on. We’re watching prayer sort of be attacked in these really bizarre ways in different countries,” he said.

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While the government states the law “does not prohibit prayer,” it immediately follows with the clarification that “praying with or over a person with the intent to change or suppress their sexual or gender identity is unlawful,” even if the individual requests it.

Hallowell emphasized, “It’s almost like 1984 because it’s saying, ‘Oh we don’t prohibit prayer.’ But then it says, ‘Well actually we do if you’re trying to do these things.’”

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The official New South Wales government website confirms: “It is unlawful even if that person has asked you to pray for them

to be able to change or suppress their sexuality or gender identity.”

“This could never—you can’t arrest someone for praying,” the host responded. “But then we see what happened in the UK and that’s exactly what happened.”

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The tension in the segment escalated when an earthquake struck mid-interview. “There’s literally an earthquake happening. I just heard that... that is wild,” Hallowell said. “We’re talking about the silencing of prayer—whoa. We have to keep this in the video.”

Following the unexpected moment, Hallowell questioned how pastors could provide genuine pastoral care without violating the law. “If somebody’s struggling and they want relief, you’re not allowed to help them. So you actually can’t serve them in any sort of pastoral care capacity,” he said.

Hallowell warns that this may be just the beginning: “It’s the first step to criminalizing... to outlawing... and people might think this is hyperbolic, I don’t think it is... it’s the undoing of the lock to eventual persecution.”

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James Lasher is staff writer for Charisma Media.